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THE
MESSAGE OF THE MISSION:
CAN WE ACCEPT IT?

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE MILL-HILL CHAPEL, LEEDS,

On Sunday, February 7th, 1875,

BY

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A SERMON.



Matt. xix., 20. "What lack I yet?"

1 Thess. v. 21. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

THAT crises of reflection and even of anxiety should from time to time break in upon our ease, and stir us from our self-indulgent apathy, can never be a matter of regret. The number of persons is certainly large who feel that they are about as good as they intend to be, or for the present can expect to be. They admit in general terms that progress ought to be the normal condition of the human soul, but they look forward to it rather as the pleasing occupation of the next life than as the imperative duty of this. Convicted of no special sins themselves, they hope that whatever weaknesses still beset them will drop away when their present organisation disappears: and instead of endeavouring to overcome them now, they patiently endure them, till the great change shall set them free. They commit in truth the greatest of blunders, for they desire improvement without effort; they long for success without preliminary toil; they would have attainment without labour; they seek to be borne along by some tide of being and reach the haven of achievement without spending days and nights of work and watching on the deep. Ignorant of the true law of moral advance, they forget that the spiritual life can never be stationary; when growth ceases, decay begins; and though some temptations may lose their power as fresh habits of duty are formed, nevertheless the springs of moral force are soon exhausted, and the enfeebled will succumb but too

readily beneath new trials. To fulfil the common requirements of excellence, and even to surpass them, is not hard : to live a little above the ordinary standard demands no great exertion ; to keep the commandments is the first lesson of our childhood, and it is a lesson which we do not wish to forget, or desire purposely to violate. But it is apt to seem to round off the claims of holiness upon us, and assume the form of the complete expression of our conscience. To the occasional appeals of higher obligation we give but scanty hearing ; this is as much as our capabilities can satisfy, and who—we ask—can claim from us what we cannot yield ?

This temper of moral content is the natural reaction against the sweeping accusations which have been sometimes heaped upon our nature in the name of religion. That it widely prevails among us, and tends perpetually to slide into moral indifference, cannot be denied : nor is it a single and isolated phenomenon, it reappears again and again in prevailing views about society at large. With easy assurance the optimist points to the vast advances in prosperity, to the development of activities of every kind, which have marked our age. In the triumphs of invention and the accumulation of capital he sees the means of indefinitely multiplying the numbers and the happiness of the human race. The educational institutions which cover the land with a network of centres of educational and moral influence, are so many guarantees of progress which nothing can shake. There is not a social wrong which does not beget an association for its amendment ; want generates innumerable efforts for its relief ; ignorance calls a thousand agencies into play for the spread of knowledge ; on every side are the enterprises of reform ; and these all appear to fill up the measure of corporate opportunity, and the spectator turns away with the hopeful conviction that if society is sick, society is engaged also in applying remedies for the disease. Is not its elevation above the past, it is cheerfully suggested, a warrant for its further ascension through the future ? May we not trust the forces of development which have carried it thus far, to lead it on to its perfection ?

A little closer insight, however, quickly dispels this unreasoning complacency, and sometimes terrifies it into an

equally unreasoning despair. Leaving on one side the miserable war of sects, and passing beyond the narrow limits of theological contests, the enquiring heart speedily finds itself confronted with vast masses of misery and destitution, of physical degeneration, and of spiritual decline. Not all the riches of England, where the wildest dreams of wealth and luxury have been long ago outstripped, and wearied imaginations sink beneath the burden of their gold, avail to check its pauperism; not all its learning has been able thus far to restrain its crime. Descend into the haunts of our great towns, and you will find it difficult not to draw a picture of almost unrelieved gloom. Enormous numbers living within a day's march of utter want, the prey of the consuming passion for drink, seem to defy all efforts to uplift them. There are thousands who are bowed with the necessities of constant toil, and pass joyless lives which they are even thankful to lay down. The young as they enter on their careers are met by powerful temptations which they have too often but little resolution to resist; the elder as they draw near their end look backwards without regret, and forwards without hope. There are classes between whom the relations are so tightly strained that a very small event would precipitate them into open opposition. Amid newer manners old laws still survive, of which the strong are sometimes base or degraded enough to take advantage to oppress the weak: and scarcely a year goes by whose history is not stained in some one of the four quarters of the globe by rapine, by bloodshed, and by war. I pass by the catastrophes which from time to time thrill us with suggestions of the horrors that ever lie in wait on the other side of safety, and drive fainting hearts to doubt if God after all be good: do but take up a single newspaper with its daily tales of guilt and need; or if you would realise them in their worst forms close at hand, go down amid crowded courts and polluted homes, nay, even through the very streets themselves at night, and see the opportunities and the consequences of excess and shame.

That these difficulties are felt to be of increasing gravity in the way of all moral advance, is matter for cordial rejoicing. Their candid recognition is the indispensable preliminary to their cure. They are not in truth confined

to any one section of society, though they are most palpable among the ignorant and depraved. They are the visible issues in the lowest classes of tendencies which are elsewhere restrained by circumstances, counteracted by public opinion, or vanquished by morality and religion. But no earnest heart can overlook them; least of all can any body of Christians be indifferent to them, for it is against them that Christianity commenced its warfare from the very first, and has ever since kept up with more or less diligence a continuous campaign. In the midst of the churches which compete for the suffrages of the country, one, as we know, is placed in a position of peculiar eminence. She assumes to be the representative of the religion of the nation. With the organisation which she inherited from her predecessor she covers the land, and she plants her clergy by tens of thousands in town and village from sea to sea. It is the boast of some at least of her members that she comprehends all varieties of thought, that she is the nurse of learning and piety, that within her walls all ranks are levelled and kings and queens pass like the lowliest for men and women, for regeneration knows no ranks. She lays on her ministers the solemn duty of declaring to the penitent the absolution and remission of their sins, and her edifices stand beside the mill, the forge, and the shop, as well as in the midst of happy homes, to bear witness that the different elements of life may be sanctified by duty, and things sacred and profane may meet and merge in faithfulness. Dowered with wealth, with influence, with prestige, can she remain blind to the condition of myriads who never come within her gates? Day after day in her cathedrals, week after week in her parish churches, she has punctually performed her accustomed round of services, but amid the din of labour her confessions and her songs of praise have been comparatively unheeded; and in the intervals of repose her invitations have been neglected and her promises ignored. Must she not, then, ask herself in tones of trembling earnestness "what lack I yet? What have I done to win the confidence of the weary and heavy laden; what have I left undone that might have drawn in the outcast and raised up the fallen"? Is she to sit silent in the face of these vast claims? Would she be true to her duty in making no efforts to meet and satisfy them?

It is now many years since one section of the church at least awoke to a sense of their deficiencies, and their endeavours to supply them have won in their way large measures of success. They have seen that lack of moral power is the secret of degradation of character, and they have attempted to infuse new strength and higher aspirations into dull minds and feeble wills. The methods which they have chosen for this purpose are not such as to command our sympathy, but to their ardour, it must be admitted, the increased energy which has lately characterised the operations of the establishment, is, among other causes, largely due. In language that is ill suited to our modern life the advocates of sacerdotalism have proclaimed anew the supremacy of righteousness. They have clothed their message in the forms of the distant past, but the message itself speaks to the living present. They go back to Leviticus for the warrant of their priesthood, but their prophetic speech is of less ancient date; it needs no other authority than its own truth and nobleness; it penetrates through the ritual of their worship and makes its way to the conscience and the heart, to quicken some efforts after worthier conduct, and restore once more within the soul the rule of God. Their astonishing advance is the fruit in rich measure of the moral enthusiasm which has animated them from the first. The control which they seek to acquire over every phase of life, we may resist; their claims to moral dominion we may repudiate; but we are least bound to recognise the important part which they have played in the present revival of religion. Their energy has been caught by their great rivals and antagonists. After a long period of comparative inaction the so-called Evangelical party is girding itself up for the contest with the dangers which are threatening society. The sterile formulæ and the barren sentimentalism in which it has so long rested are giving place to new activities; but we have yet to learn whether it is capable of any fresh development, and can really take into its service the spirit of the age. Of this revival we have during the past fortnight seen an example. With indefatigable zeal the promoters of the Leeds Mission have laboured to dispense what truth they had. Day after day have their churches been thrown open, and from hour to hour the voice of supplication has scarcely

ever ceased. They have sought to gather in the old and young, master and servant, believer and indifferent, idle and worker, and they have endeavoured to speak some intelligible word to each. They have attempted to do what so far as I know has never been done by them before—to collect men and women at the pauses of their toil, fresh from the warehouse and the shop, from the anvil and the loom, and announce to them then and there the message which many of them would never have dreamed of entering a church to hear. They have gone forth to seek, in the hope that they might save, some who were lost. They have recognised some, at any rate, of the great issues of our day, have come to close quarters and frankly grappled with them. They have honestly endeavoured to prepare, as they saw it, the way of the Lord.

And yet are we not obliged sorrowfully to confess that their way is not our way, and can never be so? We have stood outside the eager crowds, among those perhaps who could not understand our regrets, and dismissed the proceedings with light words of ridicule. Have we any justification for our attitude of isolation? The ‘Missioners’ have come to us, at all events, with no obscure pretensions. They have claimed a hearing on the ground that they were ‘something more than mere men’; they have announced themselves as the ‘ordained priests and ministers and messengers of God’; they have declared that they brought to the people of this town a message straight from God himself. Holding in their hands a book which they affirm to have been written by the Maker of the universe, they have asserted its authority to be infallible; they have offered themselves as its accredited exponents, and have undertaken to dispense the only sure means of salvation. Assumptions such as these can hardly be received with absolute and unqualified submission, and challenge an investigation into the value of the religion which is thus presented. To us the least enquiry is enough to shatter the very foundation of the edifice so confidently raised. Examine the Bible, and you will find that it is not one book, but consists of many. Their composition ranges through a dozen centuries; the area of their production is wide as the

space between Babylon and Ephesus or perhaps even Rome. The Old Testament is the remains of one literature: the New Testament is the beginning of another. Some of the books are anonymous; others can be proved with almost absolute certainty not to have been wholly written by the personages whose names they bear. Histories and romances, love songs and legends, the most glowing of prophecies, the noblest of dramas, the most spiritual of lyrics, and the dreariest of philosophies, stand side by side, bearing the impress of different ages and localities, and exhibiting a variety of forms of thought, and a still greater variety of moral endeavour and religious conception. Of the particular circumstances under which the books of the Old Testament were collected we are wholly ignorant; but from the first words of Genesis to the last of Malachi it makes not the slightest claim to unity of authorship, nor does it for one moment hint that its origin is laid up in heaven. In the New Testament, in like manner, narrative and letter and vision succeed each other, yet so far were their writers from intending to produce one inspired book, that their works are obviously independent of each other. The fourth evangelist takes no notice—by name, at any rate—of the other three, and Peter and James in their turn pass over Paul. It is well known that for some three hundred years after Jesus had passed away, the limits of the New Testament were undetermined. Books which are now accepted in it were then in some quarters kept out; while others which it no longer comprises were received. The influences which finally settled its form are not altogether obscure; they may be traced through the mazes of church history; but they cannot be admitted to be exclusively divine. There is not one tittle of evidence for the astonishing assertion that the Bible, any more than the Korân, was written under supernatural dictation. The endeavour to construct on this basis a scheme of salvation is like attempting to erect a pyramid upon its point: at the first touch it falls in irrecoverable ruin.

Putting aside these difficulties, however, we have next to ask whether the contents of the Bible are all of equal value. ‘Whatever contradicts its statements,’ declares the venerable Bishop of the diocese, ‘is false.’ I will not stop to

enquire whether we are justified in thus calmly turning our backs on the discoveries which have rewarded the patient labourers of recent years. The rocks are silent ; they cannot tell their story, or utter their reproach. The unnumbered generations of primeval man have passed away ; their voices are hushed for ever, and only their weapons and their bones offer a dumb protest, and imply that man has risen and not fallen. The stars whose firmament is dissolved in space, still make their melodies, but their song, as we hear it, has lost its Hebrew accent, and speaks the language of a vaster world. Not now, however, will we bring the Bible to the test of outward facts, weary ourselves in seeking the place of Eden on the map, and blame the telescope because it does not show us the third heaven of Paul. Grant, if you will, that whatever contradicts the Bible is not true. You will not by that concession free yourself of all embarrassment. There remains a further question : what if the Bible contradicts itself? If I find that God is described in one place as walking in the garden with Adam, eating with Abraham, or showing his back parts to Moses ; and in another, that he is spirit, the all-pervading presence of the universe in whom we live and move and have our being, which of these assertions am I to believe? for it is plain they cannot all be true. When I am told that God is jealous, and that he is love ; that he is a consuming fire, and that he is light ; that he is angry with the wicked every day, and that he is kind to the evil and the unthankful ; that he hardened Pharaoh's heart and then inflicted on his helpless country the most terrible of plagues, and again that he tempteth not any man ; that he repented and changed his purpose, and that in him there is no variable-ness neither shadow of turning ; that the very same act is ascribed in one book to God, and in another to Satan ; that God commanded the destruction of tens of thousands of Canaanites who were defending their hearths and homes against a foreign invader, and that he gave his own son to save the world,—what guidance can I secure amid such divergences? From these dilemmas there can be but two methods of escape. You may go backwards and kneel at the feet of the priest, hear from his lips the authoritative explanation of the church, read only what he tells you,

believe only what he bids you, and close your mind to every doubt. Or you may go forwards into the realms of reason and free thought, where in the glow of liberty and trust and love the devil and his hosts, of whom we have heard somewhat too much of late, and with too great familiarity, will melt away like mists before the morning sun.

Enter, then, this sanctuary of truth and righteousness, where in the conscience God makes to us his perpetual appeal, and in that august presence bow your head with reverence and acknowledge that you can claim no merit, for at the best you have but done that which it was your duty to do ; you have not passed—have you even attained ?—the measure of your obligations. Before the Only Holy all pride will disappear : but we, at least, will beware of replacing it by a positive vanity of sinfulness. The exaggeration of humility is only one degree less morally injurious than the omission of it : and if the assumption of virtue may corrupt the heart, the assumption of guilt may paralyse the will. Yet this is the temper in which we are recommended to approach the throne of grace.

‘ I see the crowd in Pilate’s hall,
Their furious cries I hear ;
Their shouts of “ Crucify ! ” appal,
Their cursès fill mine ear.

And of that shouting multitude
I feel that I am one ;
And in that din of voices rude
I recognise my own.

Around yon Cross the throng I see
That mock the Sufferer’s groan,
Yet still my voice it seems to be,
As if I mocked alone.

’Twas I that shed the Sacred Blood,
I nailed him to the tree ;
I crucified the Christ of God,
I joined the mockery.’

Alas, if this be so, it will not appear that Christianity has done much for the world. If this is still the disposition of the universal heart before it has ‘experienced religion,’ human nature can not be said to have made much progress under its direction. In the great task entrusted to it, of

educating the races which came within its influence, it has wholly failed: individuals have been rescued by some miracle of grace, but the larger number have only been confirmed by the neglect of accumulated opportunities still deeper in their innate depravity. But, in fact, the theory which is thus imaginatively expressed, misses all the reality of wrong and right, thrusts all moral distinctions back into the pit, and admits nothing to the name of excellence which does not bear the name of repentance and of faith. Are we, then, to cast aside as worthless all honourable effort, all struggling devotion, all trembling endeavour, which lie outside the circuits of the creeds? As we look back through the vistas of the past, we find that truth and heroism are not the monopoly of one church alone; as we look out upon the present we know that virtue takes up her abode without as well as within the consecrated walls. Are we to say that temperance and purity qualify us only for the society of fiends unless we accept the infallibility of the Bible? that a mother's gentleness is no better than the scoffs and jeers of impotent passion, if she be not all right about the two natures in Christ? that a father's integrity stands on the same level with the injustice of maddened rage, unless he feel himself washed in his Redeemer's blood? Shall we teach this to our children instead of the simple confession and the earnest prayer learned at a parent's knee, and load their young aspirations with the burden of unutterable wickedness? Such language destroys by its unreality the very lowliness which it is intended to produce. Against it all our love, reverence, admiration, awake in instant protest. The memory of the unchurched just who have toiled for righteousness, repudiates it. Our gratitude to those who have been our teachers and the helpers of our joy, protests against it. Our affections whose insight cannot be blinded, with all their might deny it. Nay, our trust in God, our faith in his eternal purpose for our race, our gladness in long ages of progress that have passed over our heads, our hope for longer ages that are still to come, through which he has been and will be our guide,—all these rise up against this broad indictment upon his creation, and repel the charge.

But, once more, to hearts thus guilty, some divine remedy

must be applied ; and the redemption of man is only accomplished by the death of God.

‘ Glory be to Jesus
Who, in bitter pains,
Poured for me the life-blood
From His sacred veins.

Grace and life eternal
In that Blood I find ;
Blest be His compassion,
Infinitely kind.

Blest through endless ages
Be the precious stream,
Which from endless torments
Did the world redeem.

.
Lift ye then your voices ;
Swell the mighty flood ;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious Blood.’

It was in fit prelude to this ghastly hymn that the preacher bade the sinner conceive himself kneeling with bared back and outstretched arms to receive the blows of the uplifted lash. ‘ Suddenly,’ he said, ‘ Jesus flings his own body in between, lays his hands over your hands, his arms upon your arms, his back upon your back, and himself bears the scourging to which you were doomed.’ And is this, then, the message which has come to us direct from God, that provided some one is punished, he does not much care who? that he claims only the full amount of suffering, indifferent by whom payment is made? Are these the tidings which his priests are commissioned to proclaim, that justice is satisfied with the agony of the innocent, and is willing to let the guilty go scot free? Is this the gospel which he has entrusted to his ministers that as our sin is not really our own, so neither is our penalty or restoration? These are but mockeries of righteousness, for what act done in the past can obliterate the consequences of misdeeds which we have not yet committed? Even if we could thus play fast and loose with time, equity is not so easily to be dismissed, and asks by what right could a penalty be exacted on Calvary for offences which we may still avoid in Leeds. We, at any rate, will proclaim a God who is something

more than a great accountant contriving devices for making both ends meet. We will think with too much awe of his love of holiness, his abhorrence of sin, to suppose that he could be content to let mankind for a time run into his debt, knowing that some one else had provided security which would more than meet all claims. The plan of salvation which is thus elaborately contrived misses altogether, as it seems to me, the true relation which Christianity expounds between God and his children. I have yet to learn from Jesus that God is angry with me for acts which I have never done, or that he has made me corrupt and then intends to punish me for that corruption. Enter with Christ into the village home, or stand where mothers beg his blessing on their babes, does he thrust them from his presence as conceived in sin, denounce them as deceitful-hearted, fallen and vile? If he ever did so, the chapter which records it is not contained, I am glad to say, in my gospel, but I find instead that he greets them with a blessing not a curse; nay, he declares they are the signs and pledges now of that kingdom of heaven which shall surely come. We are not, then, hopelessly impotent and incapable of good. Not all the elements of our nature lie on one level of common degradation. There are some better, others worse, and from their play and conflict come the temptations in which man is sometimes victorious, and sometimes falls. The rule of duty which emerges in the conscience and carries with it the authority of a higher law, is the witness within us of divine things, and to this Jesus did not fail to appeal—‘Why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?’ This path is the only way to heaven which I can find that Christ revealed. He bids me not plead his merits, but obey his word; not call him ‘Lord,’ but do the Father’s will. From his lips I hear nothing of ‘satisfaction, substitution, and appropriation’; he summons me to purity, to uprightness, to love. Christ, then, believed in human nature; and on that faith we, too, will take our stand. He saw that it might bear even now the stamp of heaven, and he did not hesitate to claim it for the loftiest ends. Shall we, then, fear failure anywhere in God’s creation? Shall we suppose that there are any whom he cannot, or worse still, he will not, save? Is that being just who brings the greater part of the human

race into existence, only to be cast aside as fuel for everlasting fire? Has he no pity for the souls he makes, is he content they should be doomed to *endless sin*? For, bear in mind, that dreadful fate, of which we have been so energetically warned, implies not only perpetual torment, but unceasing guilt. In those 'dungeons' which we have heard described, age after age of agony shall pass, and hapless souls shall be bound by their tempers, their passions, and their crimes, and all their suffering will be borne in vain. From amid those ghastly ranks all hope of amendment shall be banished. In the breasts of that vast company, every effort shall be fruitless, every aspiration is fore-doomed. The faintest longing after purity shall be met with instant scorn; the feeblest and most secret desire for good shall be dragged forth to the jeers of fiends, and whatever they may yearn for, they shall never be able to achieve. Can we suppose, then, that the Lord of Righteousness keeps alive myriads of his creatures, with the full knowledge that they can do nothing else but sin? Is this the way his purposes for humanity are to be fulfilled, and the triumph of holiness to be secured? It cannot be. If we have any assurance at all of his love, may we not say in our poor human fashion, that he will not be satisfied while even one remains a wanderer from his law, and unresponsive to his call? * Through all the phases of an immortal life, shall he not wean even the worst from base desire, encourage all his trembling endeavours, surround him with influences of holiness, lift him by slow stages—it may be of severest discipline—from degradation into purity, and bring him at length to the full expansion of his being, perhaps to the very stature of a Christ? I speak the deepest conviction of my soul that so it shall be. We will hold out no bribe to the indifferent, no terrors to the careless. We will not promise heaven, and we will not threaten hell. Rather will

* 'Never will I seek, nor receive, private individual salvation—never enter into final peace alone; but for ever and everywhere will I live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature throughout all worlds. Until all are delivered, never will I leave the world of sin, sorrow, and struggle, but will remain where I am.'—Saying of Kwan-yin, a Chinese Buddhist prophetess, quoted in Conway's *Sacred Anthology*, cccliii.

we vow our vows of faithfulness, and pray our prayers for strength, ready, if God so will, to perish to-morrow without recompense; shunning the evil because it is intrinsically base, cleaving to the right because it is divine, and striving to fulfil that highest word of Christ,—‘Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’

Are, then, all movements such as the late Mission to be deprecated? Is there no lesson to be learned from them, are we to condemn indiscriminately every form of religious excitement, and close our ears to all passionate appeals? We, in particular, have shrunk from anything like vehement display of devotional feeling. We have regarded the inner life as too solemn to be dragged forth to the public gaze, too mysterious to be comprised in a formula, too sacred to be laid bare for the introspection of a priest. We have treated it as something that grows slowly, rooted in duty and affection, nurtured by the glow of happiness, but strengthened withal by storms of trial. We have looked with coldness and almost with contempt on religious transport, and in our anxiety to keep clear of the faintest suspicion of fanaticism, have incurred—not without reason—the reproach of indifference. We have said that these periods of violent emotion could not last, forgetful that it was not desirable that they should. We have called them mischievous because they were transient, and have fallen into the error of assuming that their brevity was the measure of their worthlessness. It is obvious, however, that objections such as these would have equal weight against those crises of the larger life of our race which history records. They would require us to condemn that powerful impulse which carried Wesley and Whitfield through the length and breadth of the land, and at length organised itself in a circle of churches to which England is indebted for so profound an addition to the range and intensity of her religion. They would sweep away the fervour which concentrated Puritan endeavour into an attempt to set up a kingdom of saints, and establish a direct sovereignty of God, whence we, in particular, have derived so much of the loftier integrity and seriousness of our modern thought. They would have us cast out the Reformers as half crazy enthusiasts, and de-

nounce the preachers of the Crusades as disturbers of the public peace : they would have us obliterate from the roll of saints and heroes Fox and Bunyan, Luther and Calvin, Catherine of Siena, Francis, and Bernard : nay, even the founders of Christianity itself must be liable to the same charge, and could not escape the same condemnation. With these contributions to our religious life it is impossible that we can dispense. Around their origin gathered all the vehemence of long hidden emotion ; and they have been in the development of our corporate faith precisely what these forcible appeals and moments of agitation, and convulsive vows of penitence and amendment, are to solitary souls. They show us on a grand scale what may be the place of excited feelings in individual progress. They are always associated with the beginnings of new or higher life. They are not in itself religion, though they are connected with it. They are the natural, I had almost said the necessary, attendants of the first powerful realisation of God, of sin, of holiness, and immortality. If there be, and it cannot be denied that there are, persons who have never risen to the plane of religious thought and aim, they may afford the means of uplifting them ; if there be, and it cannot be denied that there are, persons who have sunk beneath that plane into coldness and apathy, they may afford the means of rousing them. The intensity of these feelings serves to render the transition from carelessness to obedience, from indifference to self-discipline, less difficult and laborious than it would otherwise be. They are not to be sought after for their own sake, and we are not necessarily culpable if we do not have them ; but they clearly fill a place in our moral economy which nothing else can supply. They help us to take that step to a higher level of purpose which, without some foreign stimulus, it is so difficult to reach. They bring vividly before us the issues of good and evil, and give us an impulse which may carry us over the first obstacles of choice. For it is acutely remarked that doing is at a much greater distance from intending to do than we at first sight imagine ; and the use of the powerful excitement produced by the presentment of great ideas before us, is to lead us to frame new habits in response to their action on our minds. We have not, I think, recognised this sufficiently, or we

should have more widely adopted some service of personal consecration for those who are just entering life, and learning the meaning of their responsibilities. We, too, may wisely ask ourselves the question, 'What lack we yet'? We believe that the best marks of the inward life are steadfastness of aim, calmness of faith, and fixity of purpose, and we believe well. 'Resolute, consistent obedience,' said Dr. Newman more than thirty years ago, 'though unattended with high transport and warm emotion, is far more acceptable to God than all those passionate longings to live in his sight which look more like religion to the uninstructed'. But in the too rigid adherence to a uniform principle we may miss all those finer touches of Christian experience which rise from the culture of our affections, and it is through these that we can most quickly find our way to others' hearts. Shall we not, then, in sympathy with their moral enthusiasm, wish our brethren of the Mission 'God speed'? We will rejoice in their success, learn from their earnestness; and if we cannot see with them eye to eye, and work with them hand in hand, we will at least strive by their side and pray their prayer 'Thy kingdom come'.





